



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

Honduran sentenced to 25 years for armed hostage taking in human smuggling scheme

PHOENIX, Ariz. – A 31-year-old Honduran man has been sentenced to 25 years in prison for brandishing a firearm during a human smuggling-related hostage taking incident investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Francis Luna-Lara was sentenced yesterday to 25 years by U.S. District Judge Roslyn O. Silver, who stated the defendant's conduct "amounts to torture." Luna-Lara pleaded guilty last year to possessing and brandishing a firearm while engaging in hostage taking.

"Human smugglers are notoriously ruthless, but the circumstances in this case were especially vicious," said Roberto Medina, special agent in charge of the ICE office of investigations in Arizona. "The Judge's sentence should send a strong message that those who brutalize others in the commission of these kinds of crimes will be dealt with severely."

Luna-Lara was originally arrested in October 2003, when ICE and the Phoenix Police Department located a local "drop" house being used by human smugglers. Sixteen undocumented aliens, including a nine-year-old girl, were found inside the residence. Four of the occupants were federally prosecuted for alien smuggling and hostage taking: Luna-Lara, Victor Manuel Velasquez, Gerardo Eufemio Cardenas-Osorio, and Daniel Samaniego-Cachon.

Luna-Lara admitted to guarding the undocumented aliens at gunpoint until their smuggling fees were paid. The subsequent investigation revealed that Luna-Lara and Samaniego-Cachon sexually assaulted three of the women who were being held.

The two men initially went into state custody and both later pleaded guilty to sexual assault in Maricopa County Superior Court. Luna-Lara received a 12-year sentence and was turned over to federal authorities last year to face federal charges.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.